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Beausejour, Man.

~~St Mary's Church~~

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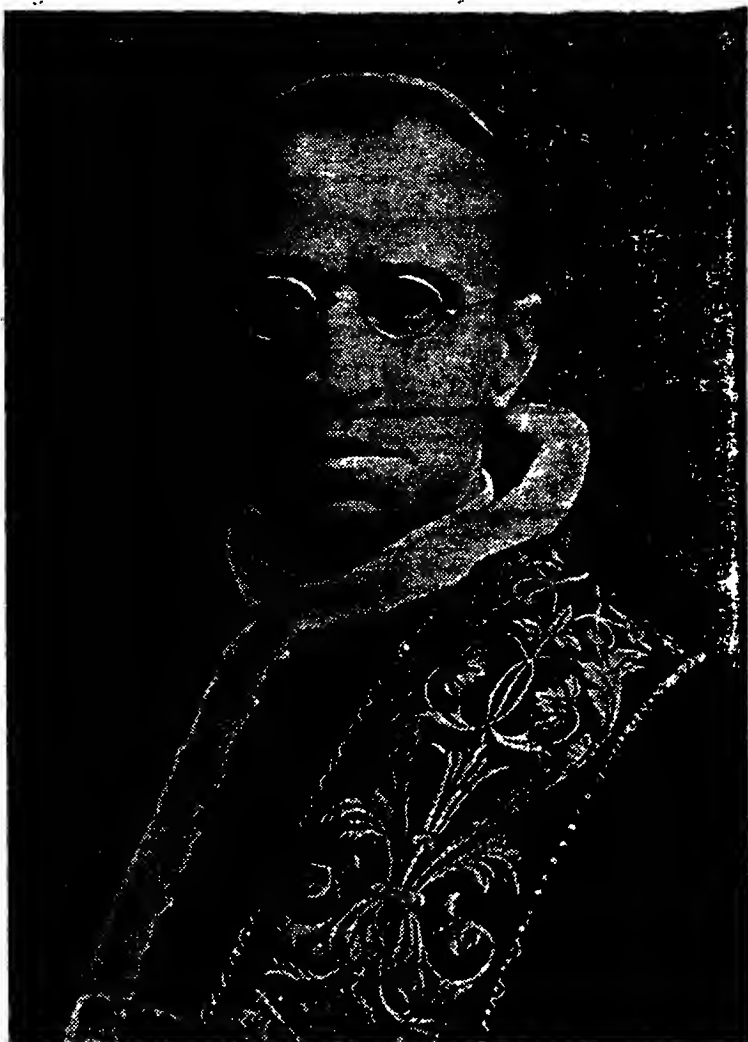


THE **GREAT-WEST LIFE**
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J. C. ILCHENA, representing The Great-West Life, in Beausejour and district, extends congratulations and best wishes to the Parish of St. Mary's on the completion and dedication of their beautiful new church.



J. C. ILCHENA



His Holiness Pope Pius XII

History of St. Mary's Parish—Beausejour

Looking at this beautiful modern structure that is now St. Mary's not many of us will remember the humble beginning of this parish and the hardships, inconveniences and heartbreaks endured by its missionaries. Long before a church was ever erected and with the Catholic families settled sporadically over the district, the priests, such as Fr. Allard, Fr. Woodcutter, Fr. Mangan, and Fr. Belanger were compelled to say mass at private homes. For transportation they depended on horses, bicycles and very often covered the long weary miles on foot. In Beausejour the section house, which was then the home of D. T. Fawcett and his family, served as an improvised place of worship, where neighbors gathered from near and far to attend mass and visit with their priest, whose zeal and faith were the inspiration on which the now large and well known parish of St. Mary's was founded. When in Sinnott, or St. Ouens, as it is now known, the priest would conduct services in the farm home of M. J. Hoban, and it was in this modest setting that the first midnight mass ever said in the district was celebrated on December 25th, 1901, by Fr. Mangan, before worshippers of numerous faiths but with a single objective.

During the administration of Fr. Belanger, 1905-1911, the first church was built with money obtained from the diocese. The congregation consisted of 100 souls, but as they could not come to an agreement as to the location of the church the diocese took over the building and sold it to the Greek Catholics, whereby we have the present Holy Ghost Church. A new site was chosen for a Roman Catholic Church and the lot purchased.

It was during the brief stay of the first resident priest, Fr. R. Marcos, 1909-1910, that the foundation was laid for the church and the rectory built. His successor, Fr. A. F. Polawski, after first receiving permission from His Excellency Archbishop Langevin, erected, with funds solicited from the parishioners, the original church on the present location, under the title of Blessed Virgin Mary Queen of Poland. By 1919 the parish was debt free.

Other familiar names of priests who pioneered this parish prior to 1916, are: Archbishop A. Beliveau, Fr. F. Kulawy, Fr. Groetschel, Fr. Stojer, and Fr. Nandzik, all of whom were instrumental in the laying of the solid foundation on which the parish stands.

It was during this time that St. Mary's Church at Beausejour became known as a national shrine, and on the first Sunday in May the faithful from Brokenhead, Cooks Creek, Selkirk, Whitemouth and Winnipeg gathered to honor Our Lady Queen of Poland.

When Fr. Palowski left Beausejour in September, 1921, for Poland, to take charge of the newly-built school for orphans of Warsaw, which he was instrumental in founding, he turned over the flourishing parish to Fr. Meissner, O.M.I. It was during his brief but successful administration that electric lights were installed in the church in December of 1924. Fr. Meissner was the last of the Oblate Order and on May 13, 1924, the Lasalette Fathers took over the parish. The first representative of this Order was Fr. John Zimmerman, who looked after the spiritual welfare of the vast district, which included Beausejour, Brokenhead and dependent missions. After he left Beausejour he did not leave the district entirely and is now Pastor of the nearby parish of Elma.

As the years go by the names in the history of the parish become more familiar and even the younger generation will remember Fr. L. Sajek, who came to Beausejour in 1924 and worked in the interest of the parish until October, 1941, when, due to ill health, he was transferred to the Lasalette Seminary at Ollivet, Ill.

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Archbishop of St. Boniface**

Fr. Sajek's long term of service in Beausejour saw many changes and happenings, the most noteworthy being the holding of the Regional Eucharistic Congress of the Archdiocese of St. Boniface in Beausejour on July 7th, 1940. Led by the Pine Falls band a procession of 5,000 paraded through the streets of Beausejour. Open air mass was celebrated by Rev. I. Zielonka of Winnipeg, assisted by Fr. S. Prokop of East Selkirk, and Fr. Latusek of Garson. Members of the clergy attending the congress included: Rt. Rev. Msgr. W. L. Jubinville, rector of St. Boniface Cathedral; Rev. A. Fortin, Chaplain, St. Boniface Hospital; Rev. E. Sajek, Rector, St. Mary's, Beausejour; Rev. S. Pienta, Rev. J. Zimmerman and Rev. U. Kustacz, all of Beausejour; Rev. E. Rocan of St. Agathe; Rev. S. Wachowicz, Rev. F. Kiviatkowski and Rev. J. Kucharczyk of Winnipeg; Rev. Henri Boureque of St. Boniface

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College; Fr. Paille, St. Norbert; Rev. F. Slusarcz of Elma; Rev. McDougald and Rev. F. Pahneuf of St. George; Rev. L. Vinette of Lac du Bonnet; Rev. F. Czusiak of Cooks Creek, and Rev. E. Deslauries, St. Boniface.

Guest speakers on this memorable occasion were the Polish Consul, Dr. Julius Szygowski, Fr. A. D'eschambault and Fr. Peter Jaworski of Ware, Mass., not knowing that within a few months he was to become rector of the parish.

The tragedy of fire struck St. Mary's parish in September, 1931, totally destroying the first church and rectory. Both buildings were replaced the following year. In the interval, services were conducted at the Greek Catholic Church.

Much is to be said for the curates, who worked so diligently, along with the rector, in the teaching of the gospel and development of St. Mary's as a parish. During Fr. Sajek's pastorate some of the assistants were as follows: Fr. Francis Slusarcz, who arrived in 1936 and left a year later for the Argentine, where he is still working as a missionary. A former curate, Fr. Anthony Lozinsky, is now pastor of Arborg Church and Chaplain of the Benedictine Orphanage there. Fr. Valentine Kustacz, although with us for only six months, is still fondly remembered. When Fr. Schick arrived in Beausejour he soon saw that the young people of the parish had been neglecting their church, especially with regards to a choir. Under his direction and guidance a choir was organized and a choral society formed. Both he and Fr. W. Olszewski, who was also instrumental in arousing the interest of the young people to take an active part in the welfare of the parish, although no longer with the LaSalette Order, are now in the States, and a credit and inspiration to the parishes that they now administer. Our sorrow at losing Fr. Stanley Pienta was tempered by the pride we take in knowing that his ability being recognized, was chosen to be Superior of the LaSalette Seminary at Ollivet, Illinois.

It was during the pastorate of Fr. Sajek that the church was so artistically decorated by the artist-priest Fr. F. Phaneuf of St. George, whose work compares favorably with the most famous artists of this or any day. Fr. Phaneuf generously offered his services as a gift to the parish.

When Fr. Sajek left in 1924, climaxing 17 years of work in the parish, the results of which are still to be recognized and appreciated. He left also a wealth of memories in the true and lasting friendships that he made. Leaving Beausejour for Ollivet, Ill., where he is still actively engaged in teaching at the LaSalette Seminary.

Bishop Cabana of St. Boniface visited the parish on April 23, 1944, and officiated in the installation of the Holy Name Society.

Another society that has done much in the six years since it began is the Holy Altar Society, composed of women of the parish. Mrs. M. J. Hoban, the president, has held office continually since the first meeting, when she was installed in office. This being evidence of the wonderful job she has done, and is still doing, in the interest of the parish. At present the group is engaged in raising, through teas and the sale of handwork, enough money to purchase one of the sidealtars for the new church, and knowing of the work of this energetic group in the past one can realize that they won't rest until this objective has been reached.

Through the untiring and determined efforts of Father Peter Jaworski, our present pastor, great strides in modernizing and improving the parish have been made since his arrival in October, 1941. Realizing the necessity for an adequate parish hall, he undertook immediately to have one built. Undaunted by the lack of co-operation and the failure to solicit enough funds from the parishioners he raised the necessary amount himself, as a result

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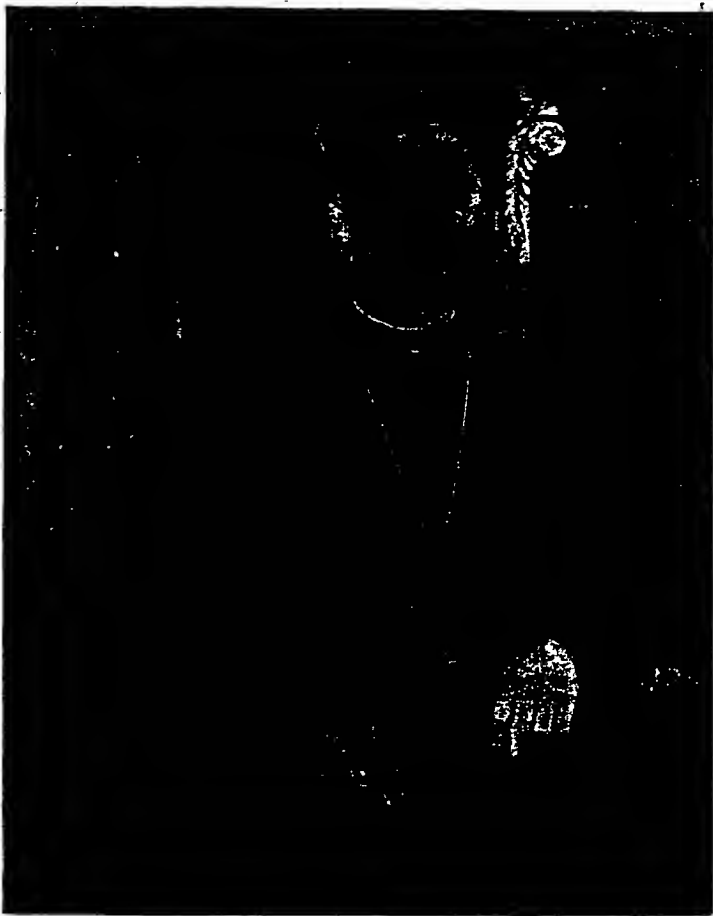
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His Excellency Most Rev. Georges Cabana, Archbishop of Anchialo

the parish can boast a modern assembly hall. He was responsible also for the installation of water works and sewage in the rectory. Desiring only the best for our parish, Fr. Jaworski never ceased improving and adding beautiful fixtures to the church. When the tragedy of fire struck for the second time in the comparatively short history of St. Mary's, the church and its irreplaceable contents were totally destroyed. One might imagine a small country church to have only the bare necessities, but not so with St. Mary's. The fixtures, pews, statues, paintings and the Czechoslovakian crystal chandelier were works of art of the finest quality, all the vestments of the best material, exquisitely embroidered, making the loss more heartbreaking and harder to bear. Fr. Jaworski, who was preaching a mission in the States at the time of the disaster, worked harder than ever, and when he returned, had a large sum of money with which to help rebuild St. Mary's. With little or no regard for his own failing health he undertook this task, determined to replace the old church with a permanent and beautiful structure, the like of which would be unequalled in this part of the country. One only has to look at this magnificent new church to understand how completely successful this ambitious endeavor has been realized.

A special distinction was bestowed on this parish, when in the summer of 1944, The Trappiste Fathers had one of their Deacons ordained in our church in an impressive ceremony conducted by Bishop Cabana of St.

Congratulations and Best Wishes to the Parishioners and La Salette Fathers of St. Mary's Parish on the Dedication of their New Church.



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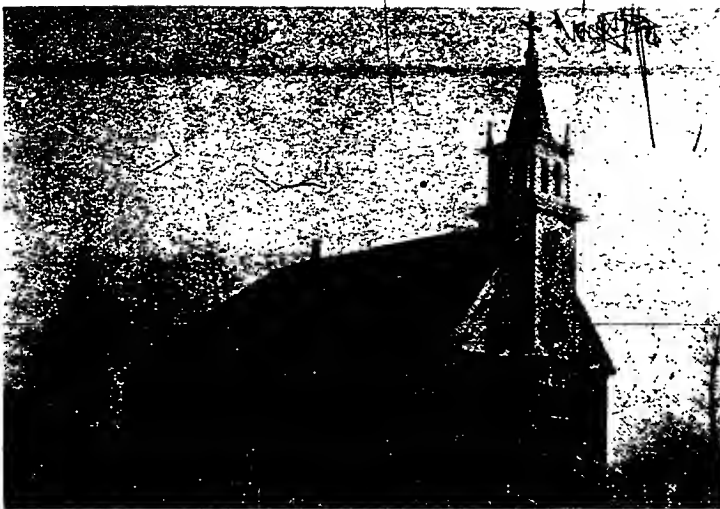
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First Polish Church in Beausejour . . . Burned in September, 1931

Boniface, marking the first and only time that this has ever been done outside of St. Boniface Cathedral.

God must have a special fondness for our parish to have sent us Father Joseph Gurka, our curate. His quiet, unassuming manner and devout sincerity have not only endeared him to members of the parish but to everyone with whom he has come in contact, regardless of creed. His capacity for work is endless, besides his regular duties in the far flung missions, the preparation of hundreds of children for First Communion and Confirmation, he introduced religious instruction into the public school, reorganized the Boy Scouts, Cubs, Girl Guides and Brownies and has arranged and prepared a countless number of concerts. Anyone of these feats would be more than enough for the average person but Fr. Gurka tackled them all single handed, and if he was ever discouraged by the lack of co-operation, it never showed in his work.

He saw the church to which he had given to much burned to the ground on that fateful day in February, 1945, but he has the consolation of seeing a permanent and more beautiful one taking its place, due to his own great personal sacrifice and hard work. Every stage in the long months of construction has felt his hand. Working alongside the plasterer, the carpenter, the painters, shoveling gravel, mixing cement, his pride did not keep him from doing any of these jobs, and he toiled at them long and expertly. It was Fr. Gurka who transformed the parish hall into a suitable house of God, where services have been held since the Sunday immediately following the fire until the present time.

Standing as a monument to the determination and consistent efforts of Fr. Jaworski and Fr. Gurka is this new church, a masterpiece of construction, that will remain to be enjoyed and appreciated not only by this but succeeding generations.

★ ★ ★

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kościół, który stoi na miejscu starego. Każda stopa kwadratowa nowego kościoła odczuła pracowitą rękę Ks. Gurki. Pracując ręką w rękę z cieślami, stolarzami, murarzami, mieszając cement czy wapno, tynkując ściany lub układając podłogę starał się swym wesołym uśmiechem lub rubaszną naganą zachęcać innych do pracy i przez to zyskał sobie serca robotników i wdzięczność całej parafii.

Ta piękna świątynia, prawdziwe dzieło sztuki, która może konkrować z każdą parafją tej wielkości w całej Północnej Kanadzie, będzie po wsze czasy prawdziwym pomnikiem ciężkiej pracy i poświęceń Ks. Jaworskiego i Ks. Gurki, oraz O.O. Saletynów i ich przyjaciół w U.S.A. i w Kanadzie. To też wszyscy parafjanie składają tą drogą swym zacnym księżom i dobrodziejom serdeczne "BOG ZAPŁAĆ" za ich ofiarność i poświęcenia i za razem czują się dumni z tej ślicznej budowli Pańskiej, która służyć będzie Bogu i nam nie tylko teraz, lecz również w dalekiej przyszłości następnym pokoleniom.

★ ★ ★

Father Wenceslaus Weselake 1908—1938



One of the highlights of the parish came when Fr. Wenceslaus Weselake, son of Mr. and Mrs. W. Weselake, of Beausejour, was ordained priest and came home to Beausejour as curate. . . .

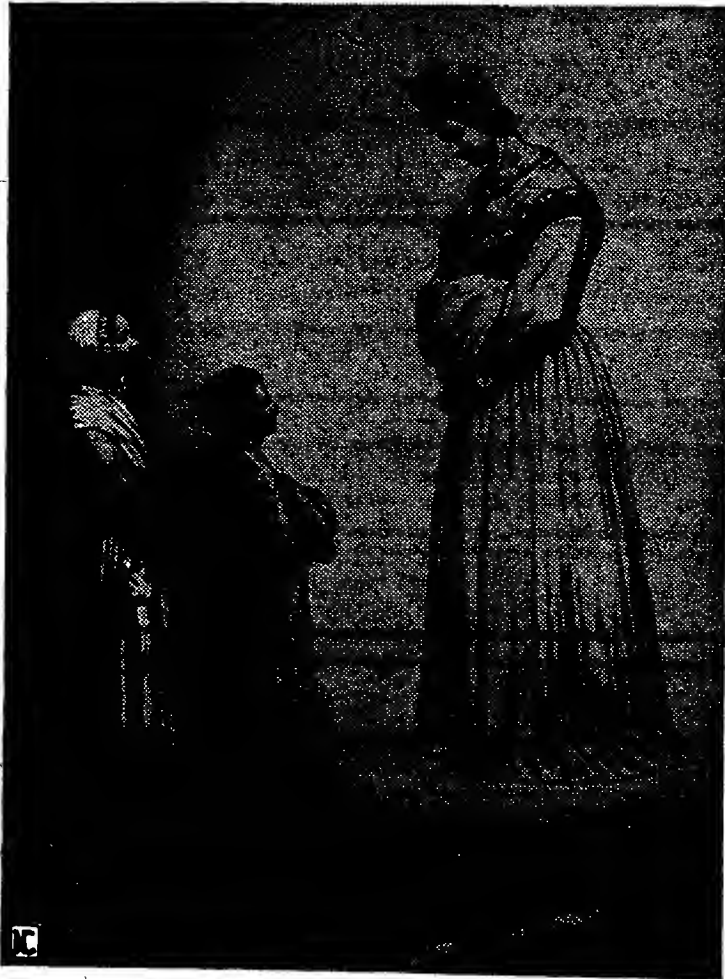
Fr. Weselake was born on October 6th, 1908, in Beausejour, and received his early education here. When he went to New York to receive his theological education his colleagues marvelled at his physical endurance, of which they remarked, "apparently Fr. Weselake has a frame composed of steel springs, and a constitution of cast iron." This being only one of his many assets, he was the personification of charity and gentleness, always willing to oblige, always smiling and cheerful.

On August 10, 1937, there was an historic and impressive departure ceremony in the Seminary at Altamont, when five missionaries, including Fr. Weselake, left for the Foreign Mission of Arakan.

Working tirelessly from the moment of his arrival he contacted pneumonia and died at Chaungtha, Burma, on February 13th, 1938, concluding, at the age of 30, the spiritual achievement comparable to the most noteworthy in the annals of the church.

Following his untimely death word was received that from the moment of his arrival in the mission he had endeared himself thoroughly through his patience, understanding and extreme desire to save souls. His passing was mourned by the inhabitants of that remote village of India as much as it was by his closest friends and colleagues. All of which goes to prove his success in his mission in life as a soldier of God.

The supreme sacrifice made by this young priest, who was a neighbor and personal friend of ours, makes us remember that the spiritual must take precedence of anything physical or material.



We wish to congratulate the members of St. Mary's Parish in Beausejour, Man., for the marvelous fete they have accomplished in erecting such a splendid edifice, as a tribute to God and His Blessed Mother. Our Missionaries have labored in that part of the Lord's Vineyard years past, and we wish our successors much success in their noble work. May God Almighty shower His choicest blessings upon St. Mary's in the years to come.

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Our Lady of La Salette

On the 19th day of September, 1846, the Blessed Virgin deigned to appear to two little shepherds of the Alps, Maximin Giraud, age 11, and Melanie Calvat Mathieu, age 14. The day was serene, the sky cloudless, the sun shone brilliantly. It was about noon, for the children heard the distant sound of the Angelus bell. They took their light lunch, and ate it by the side of a little spring called "Des Hommes." Having partaken of their rustic meal, they crossed the spring, and laid down to rest, a little distance apart, and fell asleep.

About half past two, Melanie awoke, called her companion, and said, "Let us go and look for our cows. Both hurried across the stream to the hill commanding the view below. Seeing their cows resting on the verdant slopes of Mt. Gargas, they returned to take their sacks. Suddenly there appeared a dazzling brightness, which filled the ravine. The light parted, and a "Beautiful Lady" appeared, clothed in majesty, but in an attitude of deep sorrow. She was sitting on a rock, her arms resting on her knees, and her head, seemingly weighed down by grief, buried in her hands.

At this sight, Melanie was seized with terror. "Oh my God," she exclaimed, letting her staff fall. Maximin was also terrified, but he told his companion to hold her staff, so that, if need be, they could defend themselves.

Then the "Beautiful Lady" arose, crossed her arms on her breast, and in a voice as sweet as the music of angels, said, "Come near, my children, be not afraid. I am here to tell you great news. Fully assured by her kind words, they hastened to meet her. Then the Blessed Virgin delivered to them her message.

"If my people will not submit, I shall be forced to let the arm of my Son fall. It is so strong, so heavy, that I cannot withhold it any longer. For how long a time am I suffering for you—If I would not have my Son abandon you, I am compelled to pray to Him unceasingly. And as to you, you take no heed of it.

"However much you pray, however much you do, you will never recompense the pains I have taken for you."

"Six days have I given you to labour," continued the Heavenly Visitor, speaking in the name of Her Son, "the seventh have I kept for myself, and they will not give it to me. It is this which makes the hand of my Son so heavy. Those who drive the carts, cannot do so without introducing the Name of my Son. These are the two things which makes the hand of my Son so heavy.

If the harvest is spoiled, it is all on your account. I gave you warning last year in the potatoes, but you did not heed it. On the contrary, when you found the potatoes spoiled, you swore and took the name of my Son in vain. They will continue to decay, so that by Christmas there will be none left."

As history records, the following December, there were scarcely enough potatoes left at La Salette, at Corps, and in the neighboring towns, to sow in the fields the following spring.

"If you have wheat," warned the Mother of God, "do not sow it, all that you sow, the insects will eat. What comes up will fall into dust when you thresh it. There will come a great famine. Before the famine the children under seven years of age, will be seized with chills and fever and will die in the arms of those who hold them; the others will do penance by the famine. The walnuts will become bad, the grapes will rot."



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These prophetic threats were fulfilled in different places. How many calamities have afflicted the world since 1846?

"If they are converted," promises the Virgin, "the stones and rocks will change into heaps of corn, and the potatoes will be self-sown in the lands."

Then, addressing herself in a more special manner to the two shepherds, the "Beautiful Lady asked, "Do you say your prayers well, my children?" "Not very well, Madam," replied the children with childlike frankness.

"You must be sure to say them well morning and evening," urged the Virgin of the Alps. "When you cannot do better, say at least an "Our Father" and a "Hail Mary." But when you have more time, say more.

"There are none who go to Mass but a few aged women; the rest work on Sundays all summer, and in the winter, when they know not what to do, they go to Mass only to mock at religion. During Lent they go to the meat market like dogs."

These words seem very hard. But are they too strong to condemn the sensuality of some unworthy Christians of our day?

"Have you never seen spoiled wheat, my children," inquired the heavenly Messenger. And they answered, "No, Madam." Then speaking to Maximin, she said, "You must surely have seen some, you my child, once when you were near the farm of Coin with your father. The owner of the field called your father, asking him to see his spoiled wheat. You went both together. You took two or three ears in your hands and rubbed them, and they fell into dust; and then when you returned home, your father gave you a piece of bread and said: 'Here, my child, eat some bread this year at least; I don't know who will eat any next year, if the wheat continues to decay like this.'"

"Maximin recalled the incident, and replied, "Oh, yes, Madam, I remember now. I had entirely forgotten."

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Pacific Avenue . . . Summer, 1912

What is more touching than these simple details. How eloquently they testify to the maternal tenderness of her who allows nothing to escape her loving care and who considers nothing too insignificant or unworthy of her attention, not even the lonely farm at Coin, where the ears of wheat fell into dust, which incident caused the poor mountaineer to worry for the welfare of the child.

The Blessed Virgin concluded her discourse with these words: "Well, my children, you will make this known to all my people. "Then, leaving the children, she passed over the little stream called Sezia. In the centre of its bed was a rock, on which she seemed to step. Then, without turning to them, she repeated these words: "Well, my children, you will make this known to all my people." Then she ascended the slope where the children had gone to look for their cows, moving along on the tips of the grass without bending them. Drawn by an irresistible charm, the children followed her. When the "Beautiful Lady" reached the plateau, she arose a little from the ground, looked towards Heaven, then towards the earth, in the direction of the Southeast, that is towards Rome, and her tears ceased to flow. Melanie was at that moment in front of her, and Maximin at her right, a little in the rear. "Then we saw her no more," said the shepherds in their simple account, "then the arms no more, then the feet no more; we saw nothing but a brightness in the air."

That evening for the first time, each reported the day's adventure to a different group of listeners. They told the identical story and delivered the Blessed Virgin's message with genuine alacrity. As the years rolled by and life shifted the scene of their apostolate, the two shepherds remained the clear transmitters of her Desires—the call to penance and prayer. For the past one hundred years, the soothing zephyr of Our Lady's benediction has

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Birdseye View of Beausejour, 1947

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wafted down from her Alpine shrine of La Salette, and shed a saving balm over a weary and sin-sick world.

The Apparition of Mary on the high and solitary mountain of La Salette in 1846 would naturally call for Apostles who would make "this known to all my people." This command gave origin to the La Salette Missionary Fathers, whose chief object is to make known her message and spread her teachings. On almost every continent, they are preaching the devotion to Mary and fulfilling the Mission especially entrusted to them.

At the beginning of this century, when the vast plains of our Province were newly opened to colonization, when the Archbishop of St. Boniface was exercising his jurisdiction on a limitless territory, when hard working laborers were needed to attend to the spiritual needs of scattered Catholics, the Fathers of Our Lady of La Salette offered their devoted services.

The newly arrived Missionaries pitched their tent on the lonely prairie, remote from neighbors. A shack twelve by eighteen, built partly of rough boards, and partly of sod, became the first rectory. The four shabby walls, after the Indian fashion, formed only one room, which became in turn the study, reception room, kitchen, dining room and sleeping room. Undaunted by privations, hardships, and sacrifices, these valiant Missionaries scouted the plains of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, making the message of La Salette "known to all her people."

At present, the La Salette Missionary Fathers are stationed in Beausejour, Ladywood, and Elma, and have charge of the mission churches of Cloverleaf, Stead, Brightstone, Molson, Buchan, Grand Prairie, Allegra, Whitemouth, Renje and Hadasville.

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Let us hope that in time to come the world will learn and obey the Holy Word of the Lord, that the wild beast will befriend the new-born lamb, and that the steel of the cannon will be transformed to the steel of the plow.



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